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THE

Tragedy of the Congo.

Its Root Cause. The Position as it is left by the last Belgian Debate in the Belgian House of Representatives.

An Appeal to Parliament.

By E. D. MOREL,
HON. SECRETARY CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION.

"There has never been a policy of which it may be said as truly as of this one, that it is the policy not so much of his Majesty's Government as the policy of the House of Commons."—*Lord Percy, House of Commons, July, 1904.*

Liverpool:
JOHN RICHARDSON & SONS, PRINTERS, 14-18, PALL MALL.
1907.

The "Christian Law of Labour" as interpreted on the Congo.

"The Negro must submit to the Christian law of labour."—*Belgian Premier, 12th December, 1906.**

"in the majority of cases the native must go one or two days' journey **every fortnight** until he reaches the part of the forest where the rubber vines are met with in some abundance. There the collector passes a number of days in a miserable state. He has to find himself an improvised shelter which, obviously, cannot replace his hut. He has not the food to which he is accustomed. He is deprived of his wife, exposed to the inclemencies of the weather, and to the attacks of wild beasts. When once he has collected the rubber he must bring it to the State stations, or to that of the Company, and **only then can he return to his village, where he can rest for barely more than two or three days, because the next demand is upon him.**"†

"It may be concluded, we think, that **everywhere on the Congo**, notwithstanding certain appearances to the contrary, the native only collects rubber under the influence **of force**, directly or indirectly applied."†

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* *Annales Parliamentaires de la Belgique.*

† Report of Congo Commission of Enquiry.

PAGE 40 MARK TWAIN'S "KING LEOPOLD'S SOLILOQUY"

Mutilated Congo Natives

A Few Survivors

"The work of civilization, as you call it, is
an enormous and continual butchery."

M. Lorand, in Belgian Parliament, July, 1903.

Joseph Clark

INTRODUCTION.

THE long-drawn-out tragedy of the Congo has entered a new phase with the last debate in the Belgian Parliament, insomuch as that Parliament has determined that information—chiefly financial—shall be furnished by the Congo State, which shall enable it to decide whether the interests of Belgium render advisable or not the annexation of the Congo State to Belgium.

Assuming that the Belgian Parliamentary Commission which has been appointed to examine this information (hitherto denied to the Belgian Chambers by the Congo State), frames its report wholly upon the merits or demerits of annexation in relation to Belgian interests, and decides in favour of annexation, the next step will be the drafting of a Colonial Law—of which the draft Colonial Law of 1901* will, doubtless, form the nucleus—for the management by Belgium of the Congo; and to arrange conditions of transfer with the Congo State.

The opinion appears to be entertained in some quarters in this country that the interval should see a "close time" in connection with the Congo Reform movement.

ACTION OR INACTION?

With such as may hold that opinion, the Congo Reform Association resolutely disagrees, and its views are shared by those Members in the Belgian Parliament the accuracy of whose outlook on the Congo problem has been demonstrated by the events of the last four years, and who are profoundly convinced that the genuine reformers in Belgium are not strong enough to secure a radical alteration in the existing system—whether under the Congo or under the Belgian flag—without the assistance of unremitting external pressure.

* See Part VIII.

Indeed, to those who understand the essentials of the question, quiescence or the reverse at this juncture is not a matter for discussion, so obvious is the necessity of persistent and increased effort to secure for the native communities on the Congo those elementary human rights which is the sole object of the Congo Reform Association's existence.

WHY ACTION IS NECESSARY.

But the chief reasons which influence the Association's judgment may be here briefly stated :

I.—The situation on the Congo has undergone no change.

II.—The "Reform" Decrees leave the essentials of the problem untouched, and such of the reforms as would be useful if applied are wholly incompatible with the avowed policy of the Administration, which remains unaltered.

III.—The repudiation—absolute in some cases, virtual in others—on the part of King Leopold, the Belgian Government, and leading Members of both the Catholic and Liberal Parties in the Belgian Parliament, of the binding nature of the Berlin Act as regards the management of the Congo territories.

IV.—The language of the Belgian Premier in the course of the last debate.

V.—The strength of the vested interests in favour of the maintenance under the Belgian flag of the present system existing on the Congo, and the numerical weakness of the Belgian Reformers.

VI.—The conviction rightly entertained in quarters where these vested interests are paramount, that the downfall of the present system spells their own downfall.

VII.—The absolute consecration of the King's absolutism in the draft Annexation Law of 1901.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS APPEAL.

The Congo question has given rise since 1903 to four debates in the House of Commons, and to one debate

in the House of Lords, viz., 20th May, 1903,* 9th June, 1904,† 4th August, 1905,‡ 3rd July, 1906.§

The cumulative effect of these debates has been to pledge Parliament to the liberation of the native races of the Congo from the terrible oppression which is destroying them in enormous numbers.

While the positive influence of these debates has been to bring the Congo question to the front rank as an urgent problem of international politics, the practical outcome, so far as the condition of the natives is concerned, has been *nil*. Their condition has not changed one fraction for the better since the first debate in 1903.

Lord Percy, speaking on behalf of the late Government, in July, 1904, said:

> "There has never been a policy of which it may be said as truly as of this one, that it is the policy not so much of his Majesty's Government as the policy of the House of Commons."

In that truism the Congo Reform Association finds a justification for the present Appeal.

THE REFORM MOVEMENT.

That in making this Appeal the Congo Reform Association voices a powerful, unanimous and spontaneous movement in the country, will not be disputed. Supported by no material interests—such as characterised, for example, the agitation in favour of the Repeal of the Corn Laws; lacking the inspiration of a great political leader; pursuing its labours with very slender resources: the movement has succeeded, nevertheless, in eliciting a truly national response, and has made many converts abroad, especially in the United States of America.

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*Speakers: Mr. Herbert Samuel, Sir Charles Dilke, Sir John Gorst, Mr. Alfred Emmott, Lord Cranborne, Lord E. Fitzmaurice, Mr. A. J. Balfour.

†Speakers: Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Austin Taylor, Mr. Alfred Emmott, Sir John Gorst, Mr. Herbert Samuel, Earl Percy, Sir Edward Grey.

‡Speakers: Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Alfred Emmott, Mr. J. F. Hope, Lord E. Fitzmaurice, Earl Percy.

§Speakers: Lord Reay, Lord Fitzmaurice, Marquess of Lansdowne, Archbishop of Canterbury, Marquess of Ripon; Sir Gilbert Parker, Mr. McKean, Sir Charles Dilke, Earl Percy, Mr. E. N. Bennett, Sir Edward Grey.

In the last three months some four hundred public meetings have been held to protest against the treatment of the Congo natives, and in over thirty cities and towns —including many of the leading cities—in the kingdom, by request of prominent local citizens of all parties, creeds and professions, the civic authorities have requisitioned towns' meetings.

In receiving a Deputation organised by the Association last November, Sir Edward Grey declared that it was representative of a feeling which was "widespread and influential."

The Press of all shades of political thought displays a unanimity on this subject such as has been evoked by no other public question for many years.

THE EVIL WHICH IS BEING FOUGHT.

Our movement is directed against an individual, or groups of individuals, only in so far as they themselves are responsible for the evil which it is sought to overthrow.

This evil resides in the system which has been erected in the Congo as a substitute for the normal relationship of trade and barter between the White man and the native, which remains the economic basis of contact in the African tropics, outside the Congo Basin.

It is this system, which has been rightly termed "a kind of inversion of the old slave-trade,"* that our movement aims at destroying, for all the horrors which have taken place on the Congo during the past fifteen years, and which continue, are the direct, the inevitable, the necessary outcome of its operations.

An indifferent type of official; ignorance in dealing with native races; material obstacles; climatic influences; greedy *concessionnaires*: these elements lie outside the sphere of direct causation. They are merely accessories.

So long as a system for obtaining the raw material of the African tropics by armed force instead of by trade and barter exists as the basic factor of European action on the Congo, so long will the native population suffer as it is now suffering.

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* "White Capital and Coloured Labour." Sydney Olivier, C.M.G.

To drive home this fundamental truth; to shew the inextricable connection between the operation of this system and the condition of the natives; to set forth the dangers of all kinds to which its continuance gives rise, and the impossibility of effecting any change in the state of affairs on the Congo while it prevails: to make clear beyond all possibility of doubt that the African tropics as a whole, and all legitimate European effort within them, are alike threatened by the ideas which have evolved this system, and by the consequences attendant upon its methodical practice—is one of the chief objects of this Appeal.

History can record no movement more humane or less selfish in character and aims than the movement for a reform of conditions on the Congo; none which has provided a more catholic platform of protest; none against which charges of interested motives and exaggeration in statement have so hopelessly broken down.

But the problem remains in its essentials an economic one, and the liberation of the Congo races from the new species of slave-trade which is decimating them can only come through the repudiation by one or other of the great African Powers of the false and vicious economics which have been invented to justify the systematised pillage of the Congo territories and the enslavement of their peoples.

The root principles adopted by the Powers in their relation with native communities in the African tropics outside the Congo Basin, are similar to those embodied in the Berlin Act for application on the Congo. They have been totally set aside by the Congo Administration. They are repudiated by the Belgian Government.

But a change in the condition of the natives can only come through their integral application.

. . . . . .

Great Britain is in a position to make of their application the *sine quâ non* of her acquiescence in any scheme of transfer of the Congo territories to the Belgian flag, and a clear enunciation of such policy would also have the advantage of hastening, either by international action or by the securing of definite guarantees from the Government of Belgium, the settlement of a question

which does not present to-day any serious obstacles in the way of a solution, but which contains within it, if neglected or abandoned to a mere surface-remedy, seeds of grave future complications in Africa, with not improbable after-effects in Europe.

The system at work among the native communities on the Congo is a cancerous growth eating into the vitals of the Dark Continent. The longer the knife of the surgeon is withheld the deeper and the more wide-spread will its ravages become, and, apart from the paramount considerations of humanity, the political consequences of indifference are certain, and cannot fail to be far-reaching.

E. D. MOREL.

HAWARDEN, *February*, 1907.

I.

Why the possession by the native of Tropical Africa of his right to buy and to sell (otherwise stated, to trade) is the keystone to the arch of his personal liberties and future development; and why the withdrawal from him of such right involves the loss of his personal liberties and robs him of all future economic expansion.

THE material for the economic expansion of native communities in the African tropics lies in the products of commercial value which their land contains, and which it can be made to yield by their labour alone.

The collection and preparation (as in the case of rubber and the produce of the palm), or the cultivation (as in the case of ground-nuts and cocoa) of these products by native communities, and the sale of them to European merchants, *constitute the foundation upon which European action in the African tropics is based.*

On this free interchange of saleable commodities between the European and African is built up the entire edifice of European activity in the African tropics and sub-tropics. It has taken the place of the over-sea slave trade.*

The underlying policy of this TRADE SYSTEM as the orbit within which European action revolves in the

* From the revenues derived from it, local Administrations raise the funds required for constructing roads and railways, introducing justice, maintaining internal peace: European industries benefit; African communities benefit. When the local Administrations find it necessary—in order to undertake public works, sanitary improvements, and so on, on a large scale—to borrow, either on their own sureties or from the home Government, the loans thus effected may be described as on capital account; the main object of their expenditure is the improving and facilitating of the growth of commercial relationship upon which their existence depends, and from the growth of this relationship the liabilities thus incurred will be cleared off ultimately.

African tropics and sub-tropics, is to bring an ever-increasing number of natives in touch with European markets, and to augment their producing capacity. The more native purchasers of European merchandise, the better for European manufacturers; the greater the output of raw material on the part of the African wherewith to purchase European goods, the better for European industrialism. It cuts both ways. Only to superficial observers will occur the notion of describing such a policy as mere utilitarianism; for a conception which aims at increasing the purchasing capacity of the African must of necessity respond—wittingly or unwittingly—to what we call civilising and humanising influences, since it contains within it, by its own trade-attraction, the stimulus of labour *in the interest of the native producer*, since one of its primary necessities is the gradual spread of internal peace and contentment among the native population, and since its successful expansion is bound up with the growth of native prosperity. Moreover, it reposes upon a common economic law, which holds good all the world over: the law of supply and demand.

A closer examination will reveal that the most rudimentary constituents of human liberty and progress are inseparable from a TRADE SYSTEM in the African tropics, and that the natives of the country are, through its normal functioning, guaranteed in the possession of their elementary rights.

Trade involves POSSESSION, on the part of the native community, of articles to sell, wherewith to purchase other articles. So much is obvious.

But possession of such articles involves:

(1) Native ownership over the land productive of such articles, *i.e.*, recognition on the part of the European of native land-tenure.

(2) Native ownership over such articles when collected or cultivated.

(3) Native ownership over native labour, without which such articles cannot be collected or cultivated.

Thus, the TRADE SYSTEM *per se* secures the rights of the native community in land, in the produce of the soil, and in labour; stimulates the purchasing capacity—*e.g.*, the prosperity—of that native community; opens

before it an era of steadily increasing economic expansion from which the native community and European industrialism both stand to benefit with the instruction of the native in more scientific methods of collection, preparation and cultivation; and in a degree corresponding with the development of the country by means of revenue derived, in the primary or ultimate resort, from this very trade activity.

The Act of Berlin formally consecrated this policy in respect to the Congo Basin, and even went so far—so convinced were its signatories that NOTHING should be allowed to hinder the economic expansion of the native communities of the Congo Basin—as to forbid that this TRADE SYSTEM should be hampered by trade monopolies, trade privileges, or even trade duties.

. . . . . .

It necessarily follows that a policy which denies to the native community the right to buy and to sell must strike at the very foundation of native rights, revolutionise the whole social fabric of the native community, and bring a host of evils in its train.

If recognition of the right of the native community to buy and to sell in the only negotiable articles the country produces involves:

Recognition of native land tenure;

Recognition of native proprietary rights in the products of the soil;

Recognition of native rights over native labour;

then it cannot be contested that withdrawal of this inherent right to buy and to sell from the native community must carry with it denial of native rights in land.

Deprived of land, how shall the native collect or cultivate products desired by European industrialism?

Deprived of proprietary rights over the products of the soil, how shall native economic activity be carried on?

Similarly, with the withdrawal from the native community of the right to buy and to sell, native labour can no longer be voluntarily employed in gathering and cultivating negotiable articles, ownership of which has passed from the native community.

Viewed, therefore, purely as a THEORETICAL POLICY, a conception which withdraws from the native of Tropical Africa the right to buy and to sell—a right, in its essence, common to all humanity—sterilises for ever his economic development, and, contained within its theoretical limitations, would close Central Africa to every form of economic activity.

But as the latter result is desired by no one, to put forward such a policy as a mere theory would be absurd; and the PRACTICAL APPLICATION of this conception it is which inflicts upon native communities in Tropical Africa subjected to its operation, woes more terrible, and assuredly more widespread, than the slave-catching expeditions to feed Western plantations—as in the days of the over-sea Slave Trade—or to feed the Arab slave marts—product of more recent times—ever inflicted.

The truth of this contention does not, surely, need elaborate demonstration?

Ownership of the negotiable articles of Tropical Africa—*e.g.*, the products of the soil having commercial value in Europe—cannot, sanely, be withdrawn from native communities, unless it be to vest their ownership in some other parties.

Once native ownership is removed in favour of other parties, those other parties necessarily become owners of the land also.

But these parties in whom ownership has been vested cannot enter into possession of their potential assets without native labour.

So the claim to ownership over the produce of the soil, which involves in practice ownership of native land, involves in practice the claim to dispose of native labour.

The first claim is useless—mythical, indeed—without native labour.

And how is the claim to native labour—inevitable corollary to the claim over the produce of the soil—to be enforced in Tropical Africa, where, owing to the climate, the White man can only act the part of organiser, director, and supervisor? Obviously, by one means and one means only: the constant, incessant, pitiless use

of coercion, exercised by armed native soldiery over the unarmed population, necessitating every form of atrocity and outrage.

If we contemplate a conception such as this merely from the economic side, it remains an act of robbery which nothing can justify. Assuming the scale to be large, the theatre of its operations extensive, and the number of people affected by it to be numerous, it acquires the proportions of a gigantic theft, equalling, if it does not exceed, the worst performances of those savage and barbarous despotisms recorded from time to time in the annals of history.

. . . . . .

What, then, is the position of native communities in Tropical Africa under a conception which denies to those communities the right to buy and to sell ?

The native has been expropriated from his land.

He has become a squatter on the property of an absentee landlord.

He has been robbed of all he possesses, actually and potentially.

His economic expansion is destroyed.

His freedom of movement is curtailed.

His personal liberty disappears.

He is a slave in his own home, subject to daily punishments.

Before him stretches a vista of unending toil, at the muzzle of the rifle, for alien taskmasters, without one single ray of hope to illumine his horizon.

An area of the world's surface almost as large as Europe is affected by this conception, and owing either to the apathy of the governing statesmen of the world or to their non-comprehension of the question, or to the paralysing effect of rival ambitions and suspicions, an increasing section of this vast area has been subjected during the last thirteen years to the application of this policy, with consequences which no one at all acquainted with the subject can think of without indignation, a sense of shame, and a sense of bewilderment at the short-sightedness which has permitted and still permits it.

II.

One of the consequences entailed by the withdrawal of the right to buy and sell from the native of Tropical Africa, and its danger from the standpoint of European stability in Tropical Africa.

THE enforcement of such a policy brings with it a positive danger to European interests in Tropical Africa: the military danger.

Resting upon robbery, this policy can only be applied by force.

IT NECESSITATES THE MAINTENANCE OF AFRICAN COMMUNITIES IN A CONDITION OF SUBJECTION AMOUNTING TO ABJECT SLAVERY.

As a French ex-Cabinet Minister has well said (Dubief: *Rapport sur les Colonies*, 1904), the enslavement of the population of the African tropics is the "essential accompaniment" of transferring native ownership in land, and in the produce of the soil, to parties who cannot themselves cultivate the land, because otherwise such transference would be "nonsensical."

To maintain the population of Tropical Africa in a condition of slavery IN ITS OWN HOME, requires the raising of a force of native soldiery, large or small in proportion as the theatre of the policy's active operations is large or small, and in proportion with the intensity of the policy's enforcement. This force of soldiery does not exist, therefore, for the purpose—the primary purpose—of securing peace and order, but for the purpose of compelling native communities to collect (on land which is no longer theirs) articles of commercial value (over which they have no longer rights of ownership) for alien and absentee landlords. A more or less perpetual state of war is the natural consequence wherever the policy is applied; war waged against native communities driven into a state of war by preposterous demands.

There will be, with the increase in the area affected by this policy, an increase in the area of disturbance; an increase in the number of native soldiers, the only possible instruments of such a policy; an increase in the quantity of material of war imported into the country

affected; increased chances of rebellion on the part of native soldiery; increased hatred of the White man and all his ways amongst native communities, with the ever possible contingency that such hatred may lead to combination, or even to co-operation between native soldiery and some powerful chief with organising ability.

In short, the exercise of a policy which needs, as the late M. Ballay, Governor-General of French West Africa, declared, figuratively but truly, before the Cottelle Commission, "a soldier behind every native producer," must entail the conversion of Central Africa into an armed camp, and an armed camp erected over a powder magazine: an armed camp in which European control must necessarily be limited (especially under a system which can ensure the continued loyalty of native troops only by permitting them full licence in the matter of women and loot).

With every year that passes the danger of an explosion must augment, if only because every year that passes sees more natives enrolled in an army given over, not to legitimate uses—the protection of the weak against the strong, the putting down of grave disorder, etc., calculated to inspire its units with respect for the European—but to the maintenance of a cruel system of coercion; an army which is being taught all the vices and none of the virtues of Europeanism in the African tropics.

. . . . . .

Great Britain has thousands of miles of frontier running parallel with the Congo State. His Majesty's Government, by the reports of its officers in the Bahr-el-Ghazal region, is well aware of the depredations habitually committed by this native soldiery, even in a part of the Congo territory where the products of the soil which can be claimed as tribute are few. His Majesty's Government has, indeed, many reports on the subject—as evinced by the British Note to the Powers of 1903. Mr. Grogan's records ("The Cape to Cairo") bear fearful testimony to the devastation wrought by armed bands of revolted Congo soldiery in the neighbourhood of Lake Kivu, etc. It is notorious that armed bands of revolted soldiery still linger in the south-western portions of the Katanga country. On three occasions the Congo Administration was almost overturned by two serious rebellions of native troops, and by the revolt of the garrison of Fort Shinkakassa, outside Boma, and the seizure of that fort by the mutineers.

As to the quantity of arms and ammunition pouring into the Congo, the quantity during the last eighteen months, according to published statements, has been enormous.*

Thus the withdrawal from the native of the right to buy and to sell, involving the adoption of a policy of brute-force in lieu of trade, as the medium through which to acquire the produce of the soil; brings with it a train of consequences—amongst which a serious military menace to the Powers owning territory in juxtaposition to the Congo State—and breeds detestation in the hearts of native communities against the White man over a vast area, extending beyond the confines of the Congo valley. These forces of destruction need only opportunity to make themselves felt. That opportunity may come at any moment. Sir Harry Johnston has publicly called attention to this danger. Numerous African authorities, administrators and others, in the course of private conversation on the subject, have expressed themselves in a similar manner. As Sir Charles Dilke has written: "Failure to act against King Leopold may involve our fighting the natives in his neighbourhood in wars produced by his action."

An evil policy is, therefore, paving the way for serious trouble, inevitable sooner or later, which may have grave consequences for European stability in Tropical Africa.

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* These imports, there is reason for believing, have been on a much larger scale during the last two years, and have included heavy artillery and numerous Maxims. Statistics are difficult to obtain, but particulars have been published shewing that *one* of the rubber stations on the Upper Maringa received from July to December, 1903, inclusive, 10,900 Albini cartridges, 16,000 loads for cap-guns, and 23,100 caps. In course of proceedings in the Boma Courts in 1904, it was shewn that the *Anversoise* rubber Trust had imported 40,000 rounds of ball cartridge in 1903. Consul Casement reports the consumption, "in making rubber," of 72,000 rounds of ball cartridge in a specific part of the Congo in three years; and of the rubber output being reckoned by the number of guns being available to force it. French travellers (Berthier and Bonnel de Mezières) have spoken of the arming of Asande chiefs with quick-firing rifles to raid weaker tribes for ivory. Add to this, a standing army of about 18,000 men armed with the Albini, and an irregular army estimated at some 10,000, armed partly with the Albini and partly with the cap-gun. It would be interesting to know whether the British Consul at Boma reports upon the manifests of Sir Alfred Jones' incoming steamers which ply between Antwerp and the Congo under contract with the Congo Government.

III.

Wherein it is shewn that the withdrawal from the native of the right to buy and to sell is the cardinal feature of the Congo State's policy; that the consequences of that policy upon native life on the Congo have been disastrous; that the policy is upheld by the Belgian Government, and that short of outside intervention on their behalf, millions of natives can hope for no relief from an intolerable burden.

IT remains to be shewn that this policy has not only been adopted by the Congo State, but is the cardinal feature of its being, *and is upheld by the Belgian Government, and by leading members in the Belgian Parliament, irrespective of Party.*

We have—apart from other official admissions—the implicit declaration contained in the Congo Administration's reply to the British Note, which admits of no misinterpretation.

The British Note of August, 1903, discussing this very point, says:

> "His Majesty's Government maintain that until unoccupied land is reduced into individual occupation,* and so long as the produce can only be collected by the native, † the native should be free to dispose of that produce as he pleases."

In its reply the Congo Administration says:

> "The Note confuses the utilisation of his property by the owner with trade. The native who collects on behalf of the owner does not become the owner of what is so collected, and naturally cannot dispose of it to a third party . . ."‡

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* That is, to anticipate a change which will take centuries to accomplish, if, indeed, it ever is accomplished.

† That is, until the end of time.

‡ 17th September, 1903.

And the policy therein embodied has been carried out to the letter. The Congo territories have been divided into three great "Domains": the *Domaine National* (formerly called the *Domaine Privé*) the *Domaine de la Couronne*, and the areas allotted to the Trusts.

In all these "Domains," native ownership in the soil, and in the produce of the soil, has been abrogated, and vested in absentee European landlords.

In the *Domaine National* the absentee landlord is the "State," *i.e.*: to-day, King Leopold's Administration; to-morrow, if Belgium annexes, the Belgian State.

In the *Domaine de la Couronne* the absentee landlord is King Leopold in his personal capacity.

In the Trusts' domains the absentee landlords are so-called "*concessionnaire* companies," in whose profits King Leopold's Administration shares.

King Leopold in his recent Manifesto declared these "domains" to be "unalienable."

The references to them in the recent debate in the Belgian Parliament are instructive, and shew clearly the views prevailing.

The Minister for Justice compared them with the estates of a "great Belgian landowner," and defended their existence. Disputing the contention that their creation violated the Berlin Act in the sense of conferring monopolies in trading produce, M. Woeste, one of the leaders of the Catholic Party, argued:

> "The Congo State has a property. The companies which have been created have properties, and the State and the companies develop their properties. When the Marquis of Lansdowne declared in the British House of Lords that the Congo was covered with monopolies of an abusive character, he committed an astonishing confusion of thought. He mixed up monopolies with the legitimate and rational development of private property *belonging to specified landlords.*"

M. Renkin, a member of the Catholic Party, declared that there could be no question of an infringement of the Berlin Act: "Property is a monopoly, but it is not a monopoly of trade." M. Huysmans, one of the leaders

of the Liberal party, defended the conception. "To exploit *one's land*, and to sell the fruits of it, is not an act of trade, but an act of civil life!" M. Degroote (Catholic) endorsed these views, and so did M. Verhaegen, leader of the Democratic Central League. In fact, with the exception of the Socialists, not a single member of the House, even those anxious for reforms, repudiated this central evil.

As for the Belgian Premier, he declared roundly that without the *Domaine National* the Congo "is not worth a penny."

In these utterances we have, therefore, clear and emphatic evidence of the mental outlook with which the problem of the present and future administration of the Congo is approached.

It is contended that a territory in Tropical Africa, almost as large as Europe, has become, by virtue of title-deeds elaborated in Brussels, the property of European landlords, who own the land, the commercial products of the land, and—necessarily—the labour of the people inhabiting the land, since the property would be valueless without it.

On the other hand we have the accumulated testimony of a decade to prove that the policy thus avowed and upheld has been actually practised since 1891-2, and what its results have been.

And, to complete the chain, we have the Report of the Commission of Enquiry, testifying to the above fact; testifying to the complete accuracy (as interpreted on the spot) of the Congo State's declaration in reply to the British Note; testifying to the appalling consequences upon native communities of this policy, not only in the actual mortality produced from repeated and pitiless war and by the permanent control of the villages by armed bands, but in the growing impoverishment of the people, their wretchedness, the decay of their own industries, their lack of interest in life, the increase of disease; and notwithstanding all this, concluding that:

> "The native only understands, only respects force; he confounds it with justice. The State must be able to ensure the triumph of law, and consequently compel the native to work."

Thus the consequences of the withdrawal from the native of the African tropics of his right to buy and to sell, are shewn on the Congo to have been what they must needs be wherever a conception such as this replaces the Trade-System described in Part I., and operating in the African tropics outside the Congo region. And yet the Report of the Commission of Enquiry upholds the conception; those who speak officially on behalf of the Congo State uphold it; the Belgian Government upholds it; prominent Belgian politicians uphold it; and the Congo State continues to practise it.

In the face of this, where can millions of helpless human beings, subjected to a system involving unspeakable oppression, enormous mortality, daily outrages, and an ever-present burden crushing them out of existence, turn for succour, unless one of the civilised Powers, with experience of African problems, comes to their relief, and denounces root and branch the outrageous conception which, by a stroke of the pen, reduces a whole population to perpetual slavery, boldly proclaiming as *the essential to a legitimate development of the African tropics the right of the native to buy and to sell?*

IV.

Is the Congo native deprived of the commercial instinct common to man?

Certainly Not in 1884.

FROM THE MANIFESTO OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONGO ASSOCIATION, 1884:

"The sole object is to enable commerce to follow the Association's advance into Equatorial Africa . . . . . to civilise Africa by the encouragement given to legitimate trade. The Congo region abounds in produce of various kinds now lost to the world, although industry might turn it to such marvellous account. Thanks to trade, all this produce will enter into circulation: the counterpart of its value will return to Africa, for which it will prove a source of prosperity."

STANLEY'S VIEW: Speaking to London Chamber of Commerce in 1884:

"Keen, enterprising, high-spirited peoples. Even now many a flotilla descends the great river 500 miles down to Stanley Pool, to wait patiently for months before their goods can be disposed to the Lower Congo caravans. . . . . We travelled through and through the Congo, teaching and preparing the natives for the near advent of a bright and happy future for them, inculcating commercial principles, shewing to them the nature of the produce that would be marketable when the White man came."

HERBERT WARD'S VIEW:

"The rocky banks and tree-hidden bays concealed no worse foe than the keen Bateke* or Byanzi trader, thirsting not for the White man's blood, but for his cotton cloths and bright brass rods, and anxious only to get the better of him in bargaining."

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* In 1892 5,000 Batekes abandoned their homes and crossed the river into French territory in a single night. "Where formerly stretched these populous native African villages, I saw to-day only a few scattered European houses."—CONSUL CASEMENT'S REPORT, "Africa No. 1," (1904).

Nor in 1896.

REPORT OF M. E. LAURENT IN THE CONGO STATE'S "BULLETIN OFFICIEL" OF JUNE, 1896:

Cataracts region: "The natives cultivate sweet potatoes, manioc, and ground nuts. Formerly the natives brought the ground nuts to the Dutch factory in exchange for salt, which they, in turn, sold to the people of the interior." Kwango region: "The ground-rubber covers vast extents of sandy soil, and the natives work it on a large scale. Not long ago the rubber from this region was exported to Portuguese Angola, and there was a considerable trade in it. M. Daghilage tells me that he has seen on the native markets of Kenghe-Diadia thirty tons of this rubber exposed for sale every four days." Leopold II. region: "I saw a rubber-vine which was ten centimetres in diameter, and bore numerous transversal incisions, which is a proof that the natives know and practise the right method of extracting rubber. I also noticed the large quantities of gum copal, which is to be found in the neighbourhood of the lake, and which the natives extract from the ground at the foot of the trees along the river." Kasai and Lualaba regions: "The population is comparatively dense, and is distinguished for its truly remarkable trading and labour capabilities." From the Sankuru river to Nyangwe (1,000 miles): "Around these truly Negro towns the bush is cultivated for a distance of one and a half hours' walk, and the plantations are often as carefully cultivated as they are in Flanders. The natives cultivate manioc, maize, millet, rice, and ground nuts. The latter yield magnificent crops."

But from 1903 to 1906, in order to justify a policy of wholesale robbery and enslavement, behold the metamorphosis of the Congo native:

"The native, you will find, is essentially lazy and indifferent."—KING LEOPOLD.*

"The native is entirely hostile to all idea of work:† only respects the law of force, and knows no other argument than terror."—PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE CONGO.‡

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* Public speech in Brussels, January, 1905.

† This description had particular reference to the natives of a part of the Congo about the size of England.

‡ Caudron Judgment, March, 1904.

"The native is not entitled to anything: what is given him [for his produce] is a pure gratuity."—BELGIAN PREMIER, July, 1903.§

"In the earlier stages a certain amount of coercion cannot be avoided."—BELGIAN PREMIER, 28th February, 1906.||

"The Negro must submit to the Christian law of labour. Would you let him wallow in his demoralising idleness?"—BELGIAN PREMIER, 12th December, 1906.¶

"The native only understands, only respects force: he confounds it with justice. The State must be able to ensure the triumph of law, and consequently compel the native to work."—REPORT OF CONGO COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY.

What are the arguments now put forward by the Congo State to justify the policy of robbing native communities on the Congo of the material for their economic expansion?

They are two. The first argument is that the native of the Congo suffers from incurable indolence, is deprived of the commercial instinct, and can only be made to labour in gathering the negotiable products of his country, required by European industrialism, through compulsion.

There is charming disingenuousness in this plea, following upon the appropriation of all the products of the soil, and the consequent cutting off from native communities of all incentive to labour—indeed, of all power to labour on their own initiative!

The Report of the Commission of Enquiry is full of references to the inherent "repugnance" of the native of the Congo to "work," statements which may be excused on the charitable ground that the Report emanated from worthy gentlemen who knew nothing of African conditions under a normal Trade-System. "Distinguished magistrates" assured the members of the Commission of Enquiry that the imprisonment of women and children in hostage houses was the most humane method of teaching the native of the Congo the dignity of labour! Baron Nisco, when presiding over the Supreme Court of Justice of the Congo, laid it down as an axiom applicable to a stretch of territory larger than Belgium, that the "native knows no other argument

§ Belgian Parliamentary Annals.

|| *Id.*

¶ *Id.*

than terror." The Belgian Premier, we have seen, opines that the native of the Congo is entitled to nothing for his produce. The speeches of several of the most prominent Deputies in the last debate in the Belgian House are replete with such hypocrisies.*

These statements are false from beginning to end; false historically and ethnologically. The Congo native does not differ from the native in other parts of Tropical Africa. Give him a market for his produce, and he will willingly harvest that produce, whatever it be.

He did so in the western portion of the Kasai long before the Congo State was born or thought of. He did so along many hundreds of miles on the Upper river, through the medium of the Ba-Congo caravans, long before the Congo State was born or thought of. He traded freely with Belgian, French and English traders —representatives of the *Société Anonyme Belge*—long before the enunciation of the policy of appropriation and expropriation which has replaced the trade-system in vogue elsewhere. He did so in the Eastern region until violently prevented by the Congo State. All these contentions can be proved to the hilt if need be.

The report of M. Emile Laurent, published in the Congo *Bulletin Officiel* for June, 1896, is crammed with testimony to the commercial aptitude of the Congo natives, and may be usefully consulted.

Stanley, Herbert Ward, Cobden Phillips, R. E. Dennett, Delcommune, and other authorities furnish abundant proof in a similar sense; and if that is not sufficient, the official publication (Congo Section) of the Brussels Exhibition, printed in 1897, and edited by one of King Leopold's Congo Secretaries (M. Liebrechts), can be consulted.

The first argument put forward by the Congo State to justify its policy breaks down utterly under examination, and the quotations—which could be easily multiplied—at the head of this chapter must convince all men of its gross perversity.

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* *Vide* Report of Debate in the Congo Reform Association's issue for January, 1907.

V.

The so-called "Legal" Defence of the Congo Administration's Policy.

THAT in parts of Africa where pressing problems of land-tenure as between White colonists and natives occur, the elaboration of legislation affecting land must give rise to many and grave difficulties, is self-obvious, but these do not come up for consideration in respect to the Congo, nor any regions within the tropical belt of Africa.

In regions within the tropical zone of Africa, an Administration may be fully justified in reserving to the Crown waste lands—that is, land uninhabited—or in making certain reservations of forest land for the use of the Crown. The Crown, however, in this case, represents neither the Crown in its literal sense, nor yet the British taxpayer, but the local Administration *existing for and on behalf of the people of the land.* The revenues derived from the eventual utilisation of such reserved land do not go into the pockets of his Majesty King Edward VII. in the shape of a Civil List, nor into the pockets of the British taxpayer, notwithstanding the fact that in many cases the British taxpayer has been called upon to disburse considerable sums in order to provide the local African Administration with revenues necessary to its upkeep. These revenues are expended by the Administration in the interest of the land and its peoples.

Entirely different is the Congolese conception. The whole idea of the Belgian politicians—statesmen they cannot, in any sense of the word, be termed—who have covered for fifteen years the outrageous abuses of the King's personal management of the Congo, and who are now considering how the annexation of the Congo by Belgium can be brought about without diminishing the revenue of the royal landlord and his tenants; is that the Congo and its peoples exist for the profit of Belgian individuals, or later on, of the Belgian State. The words "National Domain" convey no sort of recognition of the people of the land of the Congo to rights in their

land, in their produce or their labour, but merely the right of Belgium to exploit that labour in order that the Belgian taxpayer shall be saved all expense in running the Congo.

The first justification for this conception is, as we have seen, the idleness of the natives, and the old familiar cant of the necessity of breaking down that idleness . . . . in the interest of the idler! But the conception seeks to justify itself by legal arguments.

And when these arguments have been thoroughly dissected, what do they amount to? Simply to this: that a "State" has the inherent right to declare itself owner of 800,000 square miles of Tropical African territory, and of everything human, vegetable, and animal within it; and that through the mere enunciation of this claim in Europe, the marketable products of Tropical Africa become the *property* of this "State" (or of those upon whom it chooses to delegate that ownership), and lose, henceforth, their nature as marketable products.

Such arguments are beneath discussion. To admit them in the category of arguable matter would be to admit that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, after the destruction of the old slave-trade because it was cruel, it has become a debatable proposition among the Christian nations of the earth whether or no Europeans resident in Europe, incapable themselves of utilising the soil of Tropical Africa, are entitled to deprive millions of African natives of their land, their property, their actual and potential wealth, their sole means of economic expansion, their personal liberty, and to enslave them in their own homes, for the purpose of enabling these Europeans to amass wealth for private purposes.

VI.

Wherein is shewn that the fundamental basis of the acquisition by Leopold II. of the Sovereignty of the Congo, was the right of the native communities of the Congo to buy and to sell.

MY principal endeavour up to this point has been to make it clear:

(1) That the right of native communities to buy and to sell is the economic guardian of their human liberties, and that the removal of that right is tantamount to decreeing their enslavement.

(2) That the policy of the Congo State is founded upon the withdrawal of this right from the native communities of the Congo Basin, with the natural and inevitable results, and that this policy is upheld by the Belgian Government.

I have also attempted to shew:

(1) That such a policy is productive (*inter alia*) of a grave menace to European stability in Tropical Africa.

(2) That the arguments upon which the Congo State seeks to justify this policy are false and ridiculous.

. . . . . .

That the principles of the Berlin Act were made applicable to the Congo Basin, cannot be truthfully denied; that those principles were clearly and specifically enunciated is beyond question; and that the preponderating *liet motif* of the conferences held during the elaboration of the Act was to safeguard the unfettered economic expansion of the native communities of the Congo, is shewn by the texts.

It is also undoubted that the primary object of its being, placed before the world by the agents of King Leopold's International Association, was the extension of this commercial relationship in the Congo valley

between the native communities and the European. Finally, it cannot be disputed that identical stipulations formed the basis of the specific and separate Declarations and Conventions signed by Leopold's agents with the respective signatory Powers of the Berlin Act.

In short, the right of the native communities of the Congo to buy and to sell was made throughout these deliberations, and in all these documents, the fundamental basis of the entire transaction from start to finish. All the talk about trade and commerce would have been so much nonsense had there existed the slightest doubt on the point, for, as I have shewn, trade and commerce in the African tropics are an impossibility unless the native possesses articles of commercial value with which to purchase the goods of the European.

The efforts of all those concerned were directed at facilitating the free exercise, unhampered by trade restrictions of any kind, whether in the shape of monopolies or otherwise, of this very operation on the part of native communities on the Congo: the operation of buying and selling.

The following quotations will suffice to establish this contention. They could be easily multiplied.

Extract from Declarations exchanged between the United States of America and the International Association of the Congo, April, 1884:

"That the said Association, and the said States, have resolved not to levy Customs dues upon goods or articles of merchandise imported into their territories, or brought by the route which has been constructed around the cataracts. *This they have done with a view of enabling commerce to penetrate into Equatorial Africa.*"

Extract of Declarations between his Majesty's Government and the International Association, 16th December, 1884:

"The International Association of the Congo, founded by his Majesty the King of the Belgians for the purpose *of promoting the civilisation and commerce of Africa, and for other humane and benevolent purposes.*"

"The Government of her Britannic Majesty declare their sympathy with, and approval of, *the humane and*

benevolent purposes of the Association, and hereby recognise the flag of the Association and the Free States under its Administration as the flag of a friendly Government."

Extracts from the Manifesto of the International Association, October, 1884:

"The Association have declared to the Government of the United States that the Congo State has resolved to levy no Customs duties whatever upon goods imported into their territories, whether by land or by water, *the sole object being to enable commerce to follow the Association's advance into inner Equatorial Africa.*"

"From the date of these reciprocal declarations, the *Congo territory became open to free commerce. . . .*"

"The European traders of the Congo are unanimous in their desire that the present condition of things shall not be disturbed, by which *all can freely enter into commercial negotiations with the natives. Full satisfaction to this desire is given by the Association; absolute freedom of trade is ensured.*"

". . . . The well-known plan of the Association, whose aim is to *civilise Africa by the encouragement given to legitimate trade.*"

"The Congo region abounds in *produce of various kinds* now lost to the world, although industry might turn it to such marvellous account. *Thanks to trade, all this produce will enter into circulation; the counterpart of its value will return to Africa, for which it will prove a source of prosperity.*"

Extract from M. Beernaert's (Belgian Premier) speech in the Belgian Parliament, 1885, *defining the basic constitution of the Congo State*:

"The State of which our King will be the Sovereign will be a sort of international colony. There will be no monopolies, no privileges, no differential duties. Quite the contrary, absolute freedom of barter, freedom of property, freedom of commerce, freedom of navigation."

Extract of letter from King Leopold to M. Beernaert, 5th August, 1889:

"Declare by these presents that we bequeath and transmit, after our death, to Belgium all our Sovereign

rights over the Independent State of the Congo, *as they are recognised by the Declarations, Conventions, and Treaties concluded since* 1884 *between the Foreign Powers on the one hand, the International Association of the Congo and the Independent State of the Congo on the other, as well as all the benefits, rights, and advantages attached to that Sovereignty.*"

Extract from Deliberations of the Plenipotentiaries of the Powers at Berlin:

"In calling this Conference, the Imperial Goverment has been guided *by the conviction that all the Governments invited participate in the desire to associate the natives of Africa with civilisation by opening the interior of that continent to trade. . . . . The fundamental idea of this programme is to facilitate to all commercial nations access to the interior of Africa.*"—PRINCE BISMARCK.

"Native communities—and this is a point which deserves to be noted—were not considered communities so unstable in occupation and constancy that the soil they inhabit, *even when not utilised*, can be regarded as unoccupied land. . . . . Every time that a vote or a simple proposal raised the interests of the African races, the assembly at Berlin shewed that it did not look upon them as purely accidental associations, without juridicial rights, or outside the community of the rights of men."—REPORT OF ENGELHARDT, one of the French representatives.

"I must recall that the natives are not represented amongst us, but that, nevertheless, the decisions of the Conference will be of extreme importance to them. The principle which will command the sympathy and support of his Majesty's Government will be the progress of legitimate trade, with guarantees of equal treatment to all nations, and the good treatment of the natives."—Sir EDWARD MALET (England).

"The President of the United States regards this local government, *or any successors* resting upon the same bases of principle, as an assurance that the natives will learn that civilisation and dominion of White men means for them peace and freedom, and the development of useful commerce *free to all the world.*"—Mr. KASSON (United States).

"The temptation to impose *abusive taxes* will find its corrective, if need be, in the *freedom of commerce*."—BARON LAMBERMONT (Belgium).

"The colonial experiences of the sixteenth century, when colonies were ruined by being managed *in the sole interest of the Metropolis*, must not be renewed. . . . We have laid down, apart from the clauses of the Act, a certain number of principles *which ensure against any infringement in the future of the freedom of commercial transactions with the natives of the Congo Basin*."—BARON DE COURCEL (France).

"No doubt exists as to the strict and literal sense attributed to the terms 'in commercial matters.' It concerns exclusively trade, the *unlimited right for everyone to buy and to sell*."—Report on Freedom of Commerce, signed by Barons DE COURCEL and LAMBERMONT.

Declarations at the Conclusion of the Berlin Conference.

"The importance of the rich prospective trade of the Congo valley has led to the general conviction that it should be open to all nations on equal terms."—PRESIDENT ARTHUR.

"Soon these millions of people inhabiting the interior of Africa will, under the inspiring influence of civilisation, become purchasers of every kind of provisions, manufactured goods, agricultural implements, etc., and I see no reason why the people of the United States should not come in for a large share of the valuable trade which must soon be developed in this region."—Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, American Secretary of State.

"We secure the abolition of all monopolies, private or co-operative."—Mr. KASSON, American Delegate at the Conference.

"Freedom of trade was established in the interest, not only of civilisation, but of the native races of Africa."—LORD VIVIAN.

These quotations shew conclusively that both by the Berlin Act, by its own antecedent declarations, and by the terms of its Agreements with the various Powers, the Congo State is pledged to maintain unimpaired the freedom of commercial transactions in the Congo Basin,

which can mean only one thing, viz.: *that the right of native communities on the Congo to buy and to sell is unquestioned.*

But, as has been shewn, the Congo State has withdrawn that right from native communities on the Congo, by declaring that the only articles in the country suitable to the operation of buying and selling, are its property or the property of Europeans in whom the Congo State may vest its self-constituted ownership.

If that is not an absolute violation of the "Declarations, Conventions and Treaties" with foreign Powers, by which the "sovereignty" of the Congo State is limited, as expressly admitted in the royal letter to M. Beernaert, words have lost their meaning.

VII.

The attitude of King Leopold, his Congo Staff, the Belgian Government, and Belgian Politicians, in regard to the obligations by which the Congo State and Belgium are bound, under the Berlin Act.

JUST as the Congo Administration was driven by exposure to avow (Reply to British Note—see Part III.) the nature of the conception it has substituted as the basic factor in its management of the Congo territory, for the Trade-System universally existing in the African tropics and sub-tropics outside the Congo Basin, and consecrated, so far as the Congo is concerned, by the Berlin Act; so the increasing concentration of argument directed against its patent violation of the terms of the Berlin Act has led, gradually, to a virtual repudiation of all liability under that Act.

Evidence of this is abundant.

Extract from White Book "Africa No. 1" (1906):

In his communication to Sir A. Hardinge on 19th April, 1906, M. de Cuvelier asserts the complete "autonomy" of the Congo State. Sir Edward Grey disputes this in his communication to Sir A. Hardinge dated 3rd May:

"You should, when a suitable opportunity presents itself, explain to M. de Cuvelier that H.M. Government have in no way modified the view held by them and their predecessors that the Powers parties to the Berlin Act have every right to take such steps as they may consider called for with a view to the due observance by the Independent State of its obligations under that Act."

Sir A. Hardinge's reply, embodying the conversation held with M. de Cuvelier upon receipt of Sir E. Grey's communication, could hardly be more significant of the attitude of the Congo Administration:

"M. de Cuvelier argued that no foreign Power had any right to interfere with the internal administration

of the Congo Free State. He denied even that a right of this nature was vested in the signatories of the Berlin Act collectively. . . . . It (the British Government) could not, however, consistently with international law, intervene between the Congo State and the latter's own subjects. . . . . I asked M. de Cuvelier whether he meant me to understand that, in his opinion, Article VI. of the Berlin Act, by which the Congo Government was bound to watch over the welfare of the natives and improve their material and moral welfare, was meaningless, and that the other signatories of the Act had no right to make representations if the Independent State ignored or repudiated it. If, for instance, to take an extreme case, the Congo Government were to re-establish slavery or the slave trade, the suppression of which was one of the main ends of the Berlin Act, did he hold that the other parties to that Act would be precluded, either separately or collectively, from objecting, on the ground that by so doing they would be interfering between an independent Sovereign and his subjects? M. de Cuvelier parried the question. . . . He thereupon said, although not very decisively, that even on the absurd assumption that the Free State were to establish slavery, the other parties to the Berlin Act could not legally interfere, and that the engagements I had quoted were a declaration of general principles and intentions as regarded the treatment of the native populations, rather than a binding obligation which the remaining signatories, or any one of them, had a right to enforce. I observed that I could not agree with him, and that I thought it right to make your view of the question quite clear. . . . . There is nothing new in the position taken up by M. de Cuvelier, who repeatedly advanced these contentions in discussions with my predecessor."

This attitude admits of but one interpretation. The King's Manifesto is equally explicit:

Extract from King Leopold's Manifesto (June, 1906):

"The Congo State, then, could only be, and has been, a personal enterprise. Now there is no more legitimate or respectable right than the right of the author to his own work, fruit of his labour. The Powers surrounded the birth of the new State with their goodwill; but none of them were called upon to participate

in our efforts; *none possess any right of intervention, which nothing could justify.* . . . These principles (principles laid down in the Berlin Act) do not aim at *rights of ownership on the Congo*; they in nowise touch them . . . . My rights on the Congo are indivisible. . . . . The interference which seeks to diminish my rights partakes of the character of *positive usurpation*, to use no harsher term. It is to the Sovereign, and to no one else, upon whom falls at the present time the care of employing the resources of the Independent State."

Similar declarations abound in the *Bulletins Officiel* of the Congo State.

Unhappily this attitude has always been endorsed by the Belgian Government, was re-affirmed in the last debate, and supported by many leading Members of the Belgian Parliament, both Catholic and Liberal.

In his opening speech the Premier declared:

"Carried out by an independent Power, and within the orbit of the Sovereignty conferred upon it, the actions of the Congo State *have never been answerable in law*, either as regards the approval or the criticism of any outside country."

Many of the speakers on the Catholic and Liberal side spoke in like strain. M. Woeste, who speaks for the King *par excellence*, devoted the best part of his speech to a repudiation on behalf of the Congo State of liability under the Berlin Act, and to an endorsement of the policy which has violated the Berlin Act in its most essential feature, by withdrawing from the native the right to buy and sell, thereby destroying the commercial relationship between the native of the Congo and the European, which it was the primary intention of the Berlin Act to develop, facilitate, and extend:

"I propose to explain the real position of the Congo State. Latterly, in order to harm it, it has been said on various sides that the Congo State was the outcome of the Berlin Conference, and that the King was the mandatory of the Powers; and the conclusion has been drawn that the latter have the right to come together again and withdraw from him the mandate they conferred. *Nothing can be more untrue.* Moreover, the Act of

Berlin gives to no Power the right of intervention on the Congo."

M. Renkin (Catholic): "The international situation of the Congo has been accurately defined by M. Woeste."

M. Huysmans (Liberal): "The whole Chamber is agreed that the Act of Berlin gives to no Power the right of intervention in the Congo."

M. Hymans (Liberal): "One day, if she desires it, sooner or later, during the King's lifetime or at his death, Belgium will receive the Sovereignty of an immense African empire, which will become a Belgian colony. She will possess its sovereignty *without limitations, without conditions*. . . . She will have *no other obligations* to take over except financial liabilities. . . . I was, for these reasons, annexationist in 1901, and I remain so. I am so in principle and with a treble reserve: the guarantee that Belgium shall exercise her sovereignty on the Congo *in full and entire independence towards herself, and towards others, sheltered from all foreign interference*."

Messrs. Cousot, Colfs, Janson, etc., all argued similarly. M. Beernaert, M. Georges Lorand and the Socialists alone gave evidence in their speeches that they did not agree with this view.

Thus we have in the King's Manifesto; in the declarations of M. de Cuvelier; in the declarations of the Belgian Government; in the declarations of Catholic and Liberal politicians, partisans of the King and opponents of the King, anti-reformers and reformers alike, a virtually unanimous repudiation of the Berlin Act: coupled with a unanimous declaration that the internal affairs of the Congo State concern it and it alone; may presently concern Belgium—and in that case, that Belgium will be bound by no Treaty stipulations whatsoever.

To fling our caps in the air at the mere thought of Belgian annexation, in the face of these statements, would be to pursue the policy of the ostrich. A difficulty is not removed by affecting to ignore it.

VIII.

In which it is shewn that the Annexation Bill of 1901 confirms in every respect the personal and unfettered control of King Leopold over the Congo.

THE draft law of 1901, which—as indicated in the Introduction—a Belgian Parliamentary Commission is now examining, was described by M. Georges Lorand in the last debate as a "derision aud a defiance."

I cannot improve upon that description.

The draft law is composed of twenty-four Articles, and it is accompanied by a Preamble which tells us that it has been elaborated conformably with the desire expressed by Public opinion, and especially by the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce, that the "Administration of the Congo should be kept in the hands of the King." The Preamble further states that it is "highly desirable that no doubt should exist as to the system under which the Congo will be governed as a Belgian colony," and that "all that need be done is to persevere in the path followed with such fruitful results up to the present."

The provisions of the draft law are, indeed, perfectly clear.

Article 1 provides that the legislative and executive power shall be in the King's hands, but that no Act of the King's is valid unless countersigned by a Minister.

This Minister, Articles 14 to 16 tell us, is to be a Minister appointed by the King, open to summary dismissal, and paid out of the Congo revenue! He can only be interrogated in Parliament once a year, upon the presentation of the annual report. He is not a Constitutional Minister, and is described in the Preamble as the "agent of the King." A glorified de Cuvelier, in short!

Article 2 provides that the legislative power is exercised by royal decree.

Article 5 provides that the Budget of revenue and expenditure is drawn up by the King.

Article 6 provides that civil justice and military justice is organised by royal decree.

Article 7 provides that the King appoints and dismisses the magistracy.

Article 8 provides that the King can abrogate civil law and set up military jurisdiction.

Article 10 provides that the King can delegate executive power to the Governor-General.

Article 15 provides for the location of a Colonial Council, whose members are appointed and dismissed by the King.

Thus every feature in the present autocratic and irresponsible *régime* is perpetuated. The whole machinery of administration, finance and justice, is in the King's hands. The Congo as a Belgian colony will be, on the terms of this law, an "autonomous" autocracy run by the King and his minions.

The draft law is the consecration of Congo absolutism, and the Preamble makes not the slightest attempt to conceal the fact.

IX.

On a Possible Belgian Annexation, and the Necessity of Guarantees.

IN view of what precedes, no reasonable person can contend that the slightest guarantee exists as to the reversal of the present system in the event of Belgian annexation. Indeed everything tends to shew—in the declaration of those in power in Belgium, and by the terms of the proposed annexation law—that every possible effort will be made, in case of annexation, to maintain that system.

The Socialists will oppose it, but they are in a large minority. M. Beernaert and some of his friends will oppose it. M. Georges Lorand and his friends will oppose annexation on any grounds. But short of international action of some sort, the efforts of the Reformers will be vain.

To break with this policy, which replaces a Trade System by colossal appropriations of land, produce and labour, would mean, in theory and in practice, immediately European and American merchants, supported by their Governments, entered the Congo to carry on a legitimate trading business with the natives, the smashing of the huge parasitical Corporations which have fastened their talons into the Congo State. It would mean the elimination of the King's private revenue reserves. It would mean the collapse of the shares of these Corporations on the Antwerp Bourse. It would mean great losses to a handful of influential individuals, including the King, who have made enormous fortunes out of the enslavement of the native communities of the Congo, and whose source of wealth would be removed with the liberation of those peoples. It would mean an immediate and enormous fall in the rubber output.

The King and his immediate *entourage*, his Constitutional Cabinet, and his supporters on both sides of the House, would resist the reversal of this policy,

which they have so long defended, and from which some of them have pecuniarily benefited, to the uttermost.

Assuming the impossible to happen, and the Catholic *cave* in favour of reform so strong as to compel the Cabinet to totally reverse its policy, it would have to be prepared to come before the country with a bitter draught instead of a sweetmeat. To the ignorant Belgian Public, which has remained wholly unaffected one way or another by the Congo imbroglio, and merely looked upon it as *une bonne affaire* because certain individuals have made a good thing out of it, and because the subsidised Press has told it that English criticism is the result of jealousy of this *bonne affaire*, the suggestion that it should inaugurate a Colonial policy beginning with doles (for if the policy of the Congo State is reversed there is bound to be a deficit for many years to come) is hardly likely to be popular. The Government's object will be to induce annexation by assuring the Belgian taxpayer that he will be put to no expense. This is clearly indicated in the speeches of Ministers during the last debate. And putting the country to no expense means the continuance of the present system.

The outlook in Belgium may be summarised thus. The Public at large knows little or nothing about the Congo. If there be at the present moment a preponderating feeling in favour of annexation—and this may be doubted—it is purely on sentimental lines, and with no idea at all that annexation will cause the Belgian taxpayer to put his hand in his pocket. On the other hand, a considerable proportion of the working classes is opposed to annexation, and antagonism will certainly increase if annexation is seen to mean grants-in-aid.

A small party of intellectual and commercial men, influential within circumscribed limits, is in favour of annexation on the lines of the Berlin Act.

The political majority in the House, a section of the Liberal minority, a section—probably a considerable one—of the industrial and financial world, is in reality against annexation (because the King is), but outwardly in favour of it—*but only on the lines of the present system.*

The Radicals in the House of the Lorand type are opposed to annexation, and their following in the country will grow if annexation involves cost to the Belgian taxpayer.

The Socialists would probably follow M. Vandervelde's lead, whatever it may be, and M. Vandervelde will never agree to annexation on the lines of the present system.

Such is a fairly accurate definition of the situation to-day.

. . . . . .

What would the effect upon it be of a declaration on the part of Great Britain, such as is indicated in the Introduction? It can hardly be doubted that it would be of a salutary nature, and it would certainly be an act of greater friendliness to Belgium than allowing her present rulers to lead her headlong into a course of action which would involve her sooner or later in the gravest national perils; for to suppose that the mere substitution of the Belgian flag for the Congo flag of King Leopold, without a total reversal of the present system, will satisfy Public opinion, or quieten those who are determined to extirpate this system, can hardly be entertained in any responsible quarters. The kindest act which can be performed by the friends of Belgium to-day is to put the issue before that nation: it will never be done by the politicians now in power in Belgium. And the issue is clear enough.

There is no reason why the Belgian people should not succeed as tropical administrators, although to do so they will have to root out pestilent ideas, and false ideals, which have made great inroads on Public thought. They should be timely warned by a friendly Power that the management of a tropical estate involves in the early stages liabilities and responsibilities; and it should be conveyed to them in a friendly but unmistakable manner that a perpetuation of the existing system cannot be countenanced by Great Britain.

No Power signatory to the Act of Berlin could resent such an attitude on our part without repudiating, as a preliminary, the signatures of its own representatives at the foot of the Act; and no conceivable interest obtains for any of the Powers to so act.

In the event of endless procrastinations—which it is King Leopold's purpose to promote—or of a determination to annex without guarantees, and in accordance with the terms of the draft law, the policy open to Great Britain to pursue is clearly indicated in the terms of Sir Edward Grey's reply to the Deputation which waited upon him in November, and need not here be amplified.

But the pressing need of the present situation is a declaration on the part of Great Britain that annexation, if it is to take place, must be in conformity with the terms of the Berlin Act: in other words, that it must entail a total reversal of the system which for fifteen years has plunged the Congo peoples in unutterable misery.

There is not the slightest reason to believe that Sir Edward Grey is not alive to the situation; there is solid ground for believing that he is. But his position can only be strengthened if an early opportunity is taken by a Parliament fully informed on the essentials of the problem, conscious of the danger and the intolerable scandal of the present position of affairs, to shew all whom it may concern that the cup of national patience is full to overflowing.

E. D. MOREL.

ANNEX.

The Reforms, and How They are Being Applied.

To expatiate upon the inadequacy of the "Reforms" provided in the recent Decrees would be to give an extension to this publication which I am anxious to avoid. But it is necessary to rivet attention upon one dominating factor in the situation.

REAL REFORM MEANS DECREASED REVENUE, AND DECREASED REVENUE MEANS DECREASED RUBBER, AND DECREASED RUBBER MEANS DECREASED DEMANDS UPON NATIVE LABOUR.

The most important feature in the Reform Decrees is the confirmatory sanction given to what is called the forty hours labour law, which provides that the labour of the natives for rubber gathering shall only be demanded for sixty days in the year, instead of three hundred as heretofore.

But this law has been nominally in existence since November, 1903. And the Commission of Enquiry found that, in practice, it was not applied.

The Commission of Enquiry also found that in February, 1904 (*i.e.*, three months after the promulgation of the new law), the Governor-General issued a secret circular to the District Commissioners, that:

> "The effect of the new law on forced labour must be not only the maintenance of the results acquired during former years, but must bring about a constant increase in the resources of the Treasury."

In other words, this "reform," which consists in demanding native labour for sixty days in the year instead of three hundred, must not be accompanied by a decreased revenue, but actually by INCREASED revenue, *e.g.*, an increase in the rubber output!

And this circular is corroborated by the King himself in his Manifesto of June, 1906, in which he lays down that the amount of the revenues drawn from the country must be maintained in their "integrity."

Decreased demand upon native labour means a decreased rubber-output, and therefore a decreased revenue. But this "reform" which provides for a decreased labour demand, provides for the maintenance of the revenue at the previous figure, and even for an increase!

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Detailed information as to the application of the "reform" on the spot can only come to us (1) from regions where missionaries* are established; (2) from regions visited by the British Consular staff. Two British Vice-Consuls, Captain Mitchell and Mr. Armstrong, were in the Upper Congo for several months of 1906. They have presumably not been inactive. But no reports have been issued by the Foreign Office. We are, therefore, without official data. Unofficial data shews that:

In the rubber-producing area of the Lopori-Maringa now directly administered by the Administration, martial law has prevailed since last August because "the natives will not work." Three hundred and fifty regular troops under White officers have been drafted into the territory. The natives are required to produce forty-four tons of rubber monthly, more than double the amount the area has produced monthly for the last two years, at what price in human life and suffering has been abundantly shewn by the detailed disclosures of 1904-5-6, and by the Report of the Commission of Enquiry.

Here, therefore, "reform" spells *increased demand upon native labour.*

There is every reason to think that this situation prevails in other parts of the Congo.

Mr. John Whitehead from Lukolela, and Mr. Charles Bond from Lolanga, send further information on the crushing burden of the food taxes.

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* The obvious attempt of the Congo Administration to browbeat the missionaries into silence is treated in a separate publication.

Uprisings are recorded by every mail. In the Kwango the natives are in revolt. A rebellion has broken out among the timid and peaceful Manyanga in the Cataracts region, near Boma, the capital. The Upper Welle district is still "up." Detailed information sent to the Foreign Office by the Congo Reform Association shews that the population of the Kabinda region is being exterminated by forced porterage.

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The Congo Reform Association issues every month an Official Organ containing all current information relating to the subject. Membership of the Association (10s. per annum), entitles the Member to receive a copy regularly, post free.